

Challenges of Saudi International Students in Higher Education Institutions in the United States - A Literature Review

Saud G Albeshir

College of Education, King Saud University, Riyadh -Saudi Arabia

P .Box 145111 ZIP 4545

Abstract

The United States of America (the U.S.) is the largest destination for international students globally, including learners from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This literature review attempts to discover Saudi students' challenges while living and studying in U.S. post-secondary institutions. The researcher examined and reviewed the scientific research published on the issues and challenges Saudi students face in the U.S. from 2009 to the beginning of 2020. Thirty-seven pieces of literature met the study criteria, including doctoral and master's theses and articles published in scientific journals. After analysis and review of previous studies, it was found that Saudi students suffer from many challenges in different areas. The challenges identified in the literature are categorized into five groups: cultural and adaptation issues, family and economic challenges, health, psychological and social difficulties, and language barriers and their impact on academic achievement and educational challenges

Keywords: International students, Saudi international students, Saudi international students in the United States Saudis in the United States

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1. Introduction

American higher education institutions enjoy excellent quality and reputation around the world that have contributed to making the US the top host destination for international students worldwide (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2021). In 2019, 1,095,29 international learners studied in the U.S. colleges, and 53% of these non-local students came from China and India. Several reasons have led international students to choose to study in the US, including the quality of education, the development of scientific research, the possibility of working and studying simultaneously, and the kindness and tolerance of American society towards foreigners. However, researchers indicated that international students at American higher education institutions encounter many challenges during their study journeys. The most common problem international students face in the US is academic difficulties caused by the poor English language skills of many non-English speaking students. Furthermore, many international students face social adjustment problems and financial challenges while living and studying in the US. (Bai, 2016; Constantine, Okazaki, & Utsey, 2004; Liu, 2016; Rabia, & Hazza, 2017).

Students coming from Saudi Arabia comprise one of the largest international student communities in the US in recent years (IIE, 2021). Saudis are the fourth-largest group of international students in the US and comprise 3% of international students in 2019. The Saudi government has sent and funded Saudi students to study at US universities since the 1940s (Saudi Arabian Culture Mission ([SACM], 2022). Historical sources reveal that the former Saudi Minister of Oil, Abdullah Al-Tariqi, was the first citizen to obtain an academic degree from the US. Al-Tariqi received a master's degree in geology from The University of Texas at Austin in 1947 (SACM, 22). Moreover, the scientific publications on Saudi international students in the US have recently increased at a remarkable rate due to the increase in the number of Saudi students studying at American educational institutions. The researcher believes that the first research that concentrated on exploring the challenges encountering Saudi students in the US was a study by Abdul Rahman Jammaz in 1972. In his Ph.D. dissertation, Jammaz studied Saudi students in America and their problems of adaptation. The number of studies on Saudi students in the US has fluctuated over time, indicating differing numbers of Saudi students (Jammaz, 1972). However, the greatest number of Saudi students came to America in the years between 2015 to 2020, and due to the large number of Saudi students existing in the US, researchers grew more interested in examining the challenges of this group of international students.

1.1 Purpose of the study

This literature review aims to explore the challenges facing Saudi students in higher education institutions in the U.S. by reviewing studies that investigated the issues and difficulties facing Saudi learners on their journey to a degree from a U.S. institution. The real motive for doing this study is to reveal the challenges facing Saudis in universities in the U.S. and introduce the results. The paper also seeks to provide education officials in Saudi Arabia with Saudi international students' challenges in American universities to reform the education system in

the country.

1.2 The importance of the study

The number of studies of Saudi students in American higher education institutions has sharply increased in recent years, coinciding with the rapid rise in Saudi students in the United States (IIE, 2021). Statistics indicate that Saudi students in the U.S. have increased dramatically in recent years, making Saudis the fourth largest group of international students in the U.S. after students from China, India, and South Korea in 2019. The total number of Saudi students in U.S. colleges in 2018/2019 reached 37,080 learners compared to only 3,448 Saudis in 2004/2005 (IIE, 2021). The main reasons for the increase in the number of Saudi students in the U.S. in recent years are the launch of international scholarship programs for citizens funded by the Saudi government and the resonant reputation and high quality enjoyed by American higher education institutions. Despite an increase in literature on Saudi students in the United States, the researcher did not find a peer-reviewed published literature review exploring Saudi students' challenges in American higher education institutions. Therefore, the researcher believes that this study can analyze, compare and link the results of studies that focused on the issues and difficulties experienced by Saudis in the U.S. and present these results to readers clearly and helpfully.

1.3 Methodology

The researcher established a set of criteria for selecting literature to be used in the paper to ensure high-quality results. All literature had to meet five requirements before it could be selected. First, literature had to be published in one of the following three databases: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Proquest, or Google Scholar. Second, literature was limited to articles in scientific journals, master's theses, or doctoral dissertations. Third, the participants studied in the literature had to all be Saudi students. Fourth, the studies had to be about the challenges and experiences of Saudi students in the United States. Fifth and finally, the publications had to have been published between 2009 and 2020.

The researcher used keywords to search for relevant publications in the three databases, including "Saudi international students," "Saudi international students in the United States," and "Saudis in the United States." The researcher found 37 studies on the challenges Saudi students face in American higher education institutions that met the criteria mentioned earlier. The researcher did not find many articles published in journals on the subject, as most of the literature on Saudis in the states was dissertations. The 37 studies included 29 doctoral dissertations, 3 master theses, and 5 articles published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. All literature used in this paper was written in English except for one article published in Arabic. Research methodologies differed across the publications used in this researcher's review; of the 37 studies, 28 were qualitative studies and 4 were quantitative studies, while 5 studies applied mixed methods research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The U.S. Higher Education

Higher education began in the U.S. in 1636 when the prestigious Harvard University was founded (Thelin, 2004). After the founding of Harvard, the number of higher education institutions gradually increased until the higher education sector in the U.S. became one of the largest in the world. In the academic year 2018/2019, the number of post-secondary education institutions totaled 6,502; approximately 3,700 higher education institutions are accredited to grant degrees (The National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). The number of faculty members working in higher education institutions for the year 2018 reached nearly one and a half million, including both full- and part-time.

The number of students in post-secondary education institutions in the USA has grown significantly in recent decades. The number in the fall of 2018 reached about 19.6 million learners compared to 16.8 million in 2000. The previous number includes students in all types of institutes, community colleges, independent colleges, and academically recognized universities in the U.S. (NCES, 2021).

According to statistics, not only has the number of American citizens enrolled in higher education institutions increased in recent years, but American universities have also witnessed a boost in the number of international students. The total number of international students, 1,095,29, made up 5.5 percent of all U.S. higher education students. International students bring many economic and cultural benefits to American universities. International students also contribute to strengthening the national economy. For example, in 2018, foreign students alone pumped about \$45 billion into the US economy (IIE, 2021).

2.2 Saudi students studying in the United States

The number of Saudi students studying in the U.S. has varied over the years. The number of students decreased significantly in some years and increased in others, depending on the economic changes and development strategies of Saudi Arabia. However, it can be said that Saudi students have never stopped studying in American universities since the government sent the first Saudi students at the end of the fourth decade of the last century

until now (IIE, 2021).

In 1974, the number of Saudi students in the U.S. jumped from 800 to 2,039, and the number of Saudi students reached its peak in the U.S. in 1979, when the number exceeded 11,000 learners, one-third of them female, and this number of students was the highest number of Saudi students in the U.S. in the last century (IIE, 2021). However, the highest numbers of Saudi students in the United States, historically, were after the launch of King Abdullah scholarship programs.

According to SACM King Abdullah scholarship programs came from the deep belief of the Saudi government in education as a primary factor in developing the country (2022). The King Abdallah scholarship program (KASP) began in 2004 when the king had an agreement with former American President George W. Bush to increase the number of Saudi students in higher education in the US. KASP provided all support for Saudi students to succeed academically. The program covers full tuition and health insurance expenses of the students. The program also funds Saudi students with a monthly salary (SACM, 2022).

A table showing the number of Saudi foreign students in higher education institutions in the United States (IIE, 2021).

The number of Saudi students	The academic year	The number of Saudi students	The academic year
3448	2006/2005	18	1950/1949
7886	2007/2006	40	1955/1954
9873	2008/2007	93	1960/1959
12661	2009/2008	552	1965/1964
15810	2010/2009	1029	1970/1969
22704	2011/2010	1540	1975/1974
34139	2012/2011	9540	1980/1979
44566	2013/2012	7760	1985/1984
53919	2014/2013	4110	1990/1989
59945	2015/2014	5156	1995/1994
61287	2016/2015	5273	2001/2000
52611	2017/2016	5579	2002/2001
44432	2018/2017	4175	2003/2002
37080	2019/2018	3521	2004/2003
30957	2020/2019	3035	2005/2004

2.2.1 Fields of study for Saudi students in the United States

Saudi students study in many disciplines at US universities. The number of Saudi students specializing in engineering fields reached about 29.5% of the total number of students studying abroad for the academic year 2019/2020, making engineering the most attractive major for Saudi students studying in that country. Students also desire the administrative sciences and its related disciplines, as about 15.5% of Saudi educated people in the states studied this major in the same academic year. Administrative majors ranked second in terms of the number of students, followed by intensive English language institutes; the number of Saudi students studying at these institutes is about 9.7% of the total number of Saudi students in the United States. Mathematics and computer science majors also attracted a large number of Saudis with a total of 9.5% of the population, followed by health majors, which were studied by 8.8% of Saudis in the 2019/2020 academic year (IIE, 2021)

3. The results

After an in-depth review of previous studies on Saudi learners in higher education institutions in the U.S. and an analysis and organization of those studies' results, the researcher found 24 challenges Saudis encounter while living and studying in the U.S. The results were divided into five themes, each theme containing several related challenges. The first theme presented challenges related to cultural aspects and adaptation. The second summarized the Saudis' challenges regarding family and economic affairs. The third discussed the difficulties that Saudis face in the health, psychological and social aspects during their stay in the U.S. The fourth explored the academic challenges associated with the English language. The fifth presented Saudi students' challenges and general study experiences in higher education institutions in the United States.

3.1 First: Topics related to cultural aspects, adaptation, and racism:

3.1.1 Cultural differences

Almost all literature agrees that there are significant cultural differences between the prevailing culture in the liberated the U.S. and the Saudi culture derived from Islamic teachings and Arab values (Abdel Razek, 2012; Alenezi, 2019; Alhajjuj, 2016; Almotery, 2009; Alobidan, 2020; Alqarni, 2018; Alremaih, 2016; Alromahe, 2018; Brutt-Griffle, et al., 2020; Heyn, 2013; Hofer, 2009; Macias, 2016; Melius, 2017; Sandekian, et al., 2015; Shaw, 2010; Young, & Snead, 2017). There are linguistic differences, religious differences, and vast differences about

the rights of ethnic minorities or homosexual groups (; Alenezi, 2019; Alhajuj, 2016). At the same time, the experience of living and studying in the U.S. contributed to the promotion of tolerance, cultural cross-fertilization, and an understanding of the other for Saudi students (Almotery,2009; Alqahtani,2020; Shaw, 2010).

3.1.2 Adjustment problems

A review of the literature on Saudis in the U.S. indicates that large groups of Saudis experienced significant challenges adjusting to living and studying in the U.S.(Abdel Razek,2012; Alremai, 2016; Alenezi, 2019; Almotery, 2014; Alobidan, 2020; Alsabatin,2015; Alsanea, 2017; Caldwell, 2013; Hofer, 2009;Melius, 2017; Young, & Snead, 2017). At the same time, married Saudi students faced less severe adjustment challenges than single students (; Alramadan, 2016). Also, several studies showed that the shortcomings in the English language among Saudi students in the U.S. were one of the most important reasons for the lack or slowness of adjustment in living in America (Alremai, 2016; Alsanea, 2017).

3.1.3 Culture shock

Although some Saudi students suffer from culture shock, only a small number of Saudis suffer from it severely (Albahlal, 2019; Alromahe, 2016; Almotery,2009; Alsabatin,2015). Most studies have indicated that culture shock is not a significant problem for Saudis. At the same time, the Saudis demanded that leaders of educational institutions in the KSA and the U.S. make a more significant effort to educate Saudis better to learn more about American culture, education systems, and laws to mitigate culture shock.

3.1.4 Unfair transactions

Many researchers have found that Saudi students have suffered from unfair treatment by some Americans(Almotery, 2014; Alsabatin,2015; Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Yakaboski et al., 2017). These harmful treatments include racism, stereotypes, and prejudices. Saudi female students suffered from racism more than males due to wearing the hijab and the niqab (Almotery, 2014; Alsabatin,2015; Rundles, 2013). Many Saudis participating in the studies also believed that the racism that some Americans have towards Saudis results from biases and misperceptions about Saudi Arabia and its citizens. Some Saudis pointed out that the American media contributed to reinforcing negative stereotypes about the Saudis, describing the Saudis as backward and terrorists, especially after the terrorist events of September 9, 2001(Arafah, 2017).

3.1.5 Practicing worship

Some Saudi students faced difficulties in performing the prayers on time(Almotery, 2014; Alremai, 2016; Alsanea, 2017). Because the times of prayer often coincided with the lectures, students faced the dilemma of missing class or missing prayer. Students who did not have classes during their period for prayer lacked a suitable place to pray within the university. It is good for educators and administrators to be aware that all Saudi students are Muslims, and Muslims pray five times a day at set times, and according to some studies, some students may have a problem praying on time due to the length of some lectures and the lack of designated places for prayer in American universities.

3.1.6 The mixing of genders in the classroom

Many Saudi students of both sexes faced the challenge of being taught by the opposite sex (Alanazy,2013; Almorshedi, 2011; Almotery, 2014; Alruwaili, 2017; Alsabatin,2015; Alsanea, 2017; Sandekian et al.,2015; Young, & Snead, 2017). Nevertheless, this difficulty quickly disappeared as students adapted to the educational climate in America. At the same time, females may feel uncomfortable working with their male classmates, especially Saudis (Alanazy,2013; Almorshedi, 2014; Almotery, 2014; Alruwaili, 2017; Alsabatin,2015).

3.1.7 The changing opinions around social issues and women's issues

Some researchers found a positive relationship between the length of stay in the U.S. and a greater openness among Saudis about many social issues, especially women's rights and women's roles in society Alqahtani, 2020; Heyn,2013). Some theses researchers indicated that Saudis who reside in America temporarily for their studies developed positive attitudes about empowering women in society and supporting their right to drive vehicles, behavior that had been banned in Saudi Arabia until recently (Alqahtani ,2020; Alsanea, 2017). It is noteworthy that the issue of whether Saudi women should be allowed to drive had been hotly contested within Saudi society until the recent political decision of the Saudi government to allow women to drive. Studies have also discovered that after moving to the United States, many married male Saudi students come to take on family roles that would be unusual for them in their own country, such as childcare, cooking, and housekeeping.

3.1.8 Independence

Saudi students, especially females, felt more independent and less dependent on males in their daily lives (Alenezi, 2019; Almotery, 2014; Alremai, 2016; Alruwaili, 2017; Alsabatin,2015; Alsanea, 2017; Arafah, 2017; Hofer, 2009; Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Macias, 2016). Also, some female students started driving vehicles in America for the first time in their lives. Previously, women were not allowed to drive cars in Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Second: challenges related to the family and the economy

3.2.1 Negligence toward family and children

The female students felt a kind of remorse for their shortcomings regarding their responsibilities to the family and their children because they were preoccupied with their studies (Alramadan, 2016; Alremaih, 2016). Student mothers have stated that they place their children in nurseries while studying at universities.

3.2.2 Availability of nurseries

One of the challenges for female students who have children is to find nurseries for their young children (Alramadan, 2016; Alremaih, 2016). Some mothers have faced difficulty finding a place for their children because many nurseries do not have the capacity to receive new children. Saudi female students who place their children in nurseries while they are studying at universities also complained that the cost of nursery care is high and negatively affects the family's budget.

3.2.3 Financial difficulties

Financial problems for Saudi students were not primary because most Saudi students receive monthly assistance from the Saudi government (Aldossari, 2016; Alhajjuj, 2016; Alremaih, 2016). However, several researchers found that married students who have children are more likely to face financial challenges, especially students who have young children who need nurseries; the cost of nurseries consumes a large part of Saudi students' money (Alhajjuj, 2016; Alremaih, 2016).

3.3 Third: challenges related to health, psychological, and social aspects

3.3.1 Homesickness

The loss of family, friends, and homeland was one of the difficulties that surfaced repeatedly in the literature related to Saudi international students in the U.S. (Al ramadan, 2016; Alremaih, 2016; Arafah, 2017; Caldwell, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Hofer, 2009; Shaw, 2010; Young, & Snead, 2017). However, the level of this homesickness gradually decreases over time, followed by the stage of adapting to living and studying in the United States.

3.3.2 Social integration and friendships with Americans

Many Saudi students felt isolated and experienced challenges establishing a social life in the United States, encountering obstacles in forming friendships with Americans, both on and off university campuses (Abdel Razek, 2012; Alremaih, 2016; Almotery, 2014; Almusaiteer, 2015; Alromahe, 2016; Alsabatin, 2015; Alsanea, 2017; Al-Thobaiti, 2019; Arafah, 2017; Caldwell, 2013; Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Melius, 2017; Shaw, 2010; Young, & Snead, 2017). Most of the friends of these Saudi students were fellow Saudis and other Arabs; it may have been that their English language deficit negatively affected their ability to make friends (Almotery, 2014; Almusaiteer, 2015; Alsabatin, 2015; Alsanea, 2017; Young, & Snead, 2017). Some literature also indicated that differences in values might be a reason why Saudi students are not keen on forming friendships with Americans, especially since many Americans engage in acts for fun that violate Islamic teachings, such as drinking alcohol (Almusaiteer, 2015; Alsanea, 2017; Al-Thobaiti, 2019).

3.3.3 Health and psychological problems

Many Saudi students have experienced varying degrees of stress, headaches, tension, anxiety, and depression during their temporary stay in the U.S. (Alhajjuj, 2016; Almotery, 2014; Alqarni, 2018; Brutt-Griffle et al., 2020; Caldwell, 2013; Melius, 2017; Young, & Snead, 2017).

3.3.4 Weather

Despite the beauty of seeing snow for the first time, many Saudi students could not stand the harshly cold weather in certain regions of the The U.S. (Arafah, 2017; Heyn, 2013; Shaw, 2010; Young, & Snead, 2017).

3.4 Fourth: Academic challenges related to the English language

3.4.1 English language

Studies have found that the English language is the most significant academic obstacle to the success of Saudi students attending higher education institutions in the U.S. (Abdel Razek, 2012; Alenezi, 2019; Alhajjuj, 2016; Almorshedi, 2014; Almotery, 2009; Alobidan, 2020; Alqarni, 2018; Alremaih, 2016; Alromahe, 2018; Brutt-Griffle, et al., 2020; Heyn, 2013; Hofer, 2009; Macias, 2016; Melius, 2017; Sandekian, et al., 2015; Shaw, 2010; Young, & Snead, 2017). Saudi students have confirmed that their low English language skills have negatively affected their academic achievement (Sandekian, et al., 2015). However, researchers have also found a relationship between the length of stay in the U.S. and the degree of mastery of English language skills for Saudi students (Alqarni, 2018; Alremaih, 2016; Alromahe, 2018).

3.4.2 Academic writing

In particular, studies have found that writing in a scientific and academic style, such as that required to write scientific theses and study projects, is a major challenge for Saudis, especially graduate students (Alenezi, 2019; Alhajjuj, 2016; Alhojailan, 2015; Almorshedi, 2011; Almotery, 2009; Almotery, 2014; Alqarni, 2018; Alromahe, 2018; Bar, 2017; Brutt-Griffleet al., 2020; Hofer, 2009; Sandekian, et al., 2015). The writing levels of Saudi students were below the professors' expectations in most cases (Alenezi, 2019; Alhajjuj, 2016; Alhojailan, 2015;

Almorshedi, 2014; Almotery, 2014; Alromahe, 2018; Bar, 2017). At the same time, the writing centers of their respective universities contributed significantly to the improvement of the written work of Saudi students, as the experts in the writing centers provided effective feedback to the students before they handed over any written projects to their professors (Alhojailan, 2015; Almorshedi, 2014; Almotery, 2014; Alromahe, 2018).

3.4.3 Academic reading

Saudi students face difficulties in reading books and references used in university curricula as well. According to researchers, these difficulties are due in part to the weak English language skills of some Saudi students but also to the large number of pages that professors ask students to read before each lecture. One of the additional difficulties for Saudis in regards to academic reading is that American professors have high expectations for their students, and they expect students not only to understand the topics they are reading but also to delve into details and think critically about the contents of the books. At the same time, studies have found that the more students advance in their academic levels, the fewer language challenges they face and the less complicated academic reading becomes (Alenezi, 2019; Alromahe, 2018; Hofer, 2009; Melius, 2017).

3.4.4 Challenges in listening and speaking

Saudi students struggled to understand the content of some lectures due to poor English listening skills. Some participants in the studies found that professors spoke quickly in the classroom and used informal terms that Saudi students did not hear. Furthermore, speaking in front of others was a challenge for many Saudis due to their lack of fluency or lack of confidence in their skills to communicate their ideas to others (Hofer, 2009; Sandekian, et al., 2015). One of the common difficulties in studies of Saudis in the U.S. is their fear of speaking, asking questions, and making presentations in front of American students and professors because of their lack of confidence in their abilities and fluency, and their fear of Americans not understanding what they are talking about. This makes many Saudi students remain silent in the halls, and they often do not take the initiative to ask questions (Albahlal, 2019; Alhajjaj, 2016; Almorshedi, 2014; Alqarni, 2018; Heyn, 2013; Macias, 2016; Unruh & Obeida, 2015; Young, & Snead, 2017).

3.4.5 Challenges related to taking notes and exams

Writing, the most important point of the lessons, was not an easy task for the Saudis, and they found it very difficult to take notes on what their teachers said during lectures. The reason for the difficulty with taking notes for this group of students is the weakness of their language abilities and the difficulty of paying attention to the professors' explanations while writing down the critical points during the lectures (Alenezi, 2019; Melius, 2017; Young, & Snead, 2017). Furthermore, studies on Saudis in American higher education institutions found that many Saudi students face significant challenges during exams. Among the difficulties during the tests for these students is understanding the meanings of the questions and the difficulty in writing the answers, especially if the questions are essays that require students to write many sentences in an orderly manner in a short time (Almotery, 2014; Alqarni, 2018; Young, & Snead, 2017). These previously mentioned challenges are due to a large group of Saudis' poor reading and writing skills.

3.4.6 Language preparation

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, most Saudis studying in the U.S. study in language institutes in America before starting university studies because of the weak language skills of most students. At the same time, many Saudis believed that the language institutes in the U.S. fell short of their expectations, and they expected that they would quickly master the language, but the reality was different (Alsabatin, 2015; Alremaih, 2016). At the same time, some students believed that the length of stay in intensive language institutes does not contribute to reducing the language challenges in university studies (Alsabatin, 2015). Studies also indicated that a large part of Saudis believe that Saudi schools and universities have not played a sufficient role in preparing Saudi students to study abroad, particularly helping students master English language skills, which is the world language in this era (Alghamdi, 2020; Alhojailan, 2015; Almorshedi, 2011; Almotery, 2014; Alobidan, 2020; Bar, 2017; Brutt-Griffleet et al., 2020; Melius, 2017; Unruh & Obeida, 2015)

3.5 Fifth: educational challenges and experiences

3.5.1 The educational system and learning environments

Several studies have revealed that Saudi students find notable differences between education systems and educational environments in Saudi Arabia and the United States. These dissimilarities include gender in the classroom. In the United States, male and female students study together, while there is a gender separation in schools in the KSA. One of the differences researchers found was in teaching methods and objectives. Teaching in the U.S. places the student at the center of the educational process and expects the student to play an active role in the classroom, while students in Saudi schools and universities often play the role of a passive learner who listens to what the professor has to say. American professors focus on higher levels of thinking, such as critical thinking, analysis, and innovation, while education in the KSA still depends on memorization and memorization (Abdel Razek, 2012; Almorshedi, 2011; Almotery, 2014; Alqarni, 2018; Al-Romahe, 2018; Al-

Thobaiti, 2019; Bar, 2017; Brutt-Griffle, Nurunnabi, & Kim, 2020; Caldwell, 2013; Jabli, 2020; Macias, 2016; Shaw, 2010; Unruh & Obeida, 2015; Young, & Snead, 2017). Furthermore, American professors are keener on applying cooperative education strategies in the classroom and using educational technologies, and there is more academic freedom in American higher education institutions than its counterparts in KSA (Alqarni, 2018; Al-Romahe, 2018; Al-Thobaiti, 2019).

3.5.2 Academic Admission:

Receiving academic admission from American universities has been a big challenge for many Saudi students. Saudi students have complained about the numerous requirements in universities in the U.S. regarding the necessity of earning a high score in standard language tests such as TOEFL, which is very difficult for many Saudis (Almorshedi, 2011; Alremaih, 2016; Almotery, 2014; Almotery, 2009; Caldwell, 2013; Hofer, 2009). At the same time, the researchers found that Saudi students in the postgraduate stages face more significant difficulties in admission than bachelor students, as universities have many admission requirements (Alremaih, 2016; Almotery, 2014). For example, postgraduate applicants have to prove that they are well qualified for the postgraduate stage. The required proof for applicants to prove their aptitude for academic admission is high scores on English language tests. Additionally, applicants need to have high scores on other standardized tests related to graduate studies in the United States, such as the Graduate Assessment Test (GRE).

3.5.3 Relationships with Professors:

Most of the literature discussing the relationship between Saudi students and their professors and supervisors indicates that relationships are generally positive (Alghamdi, 2020; Alhajjuj, 2016; Almotery, 2014; Alsabatin, 2015; Bar, 2017; Caldwell, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Macias, 2016). The Saudis found that their teacher was one of the most important sources of support for them in continuing their educational journey in the United States. Saudi students in America praised most of their American professors and said that they are distinguished for their modesty and attempt to help their students, and it is easy to communicate with them during official working hours and e-mails in case of inquiries related to the contents of the courses.

4. Conclusion

This review examined the challenges experienced by Saudi international students in higher education institutions in the United States. The challenges were summarized in five topics, and each topic had a number of challenges that were repeated in a number of previous studies about this group of international students. The first topic displayed challenges related to social viewpoints and adjustment. The second topic summarized the Saudis' challenges concerning family and financial issues. The third case detailed the Saudi students' difficulties in the health, psychological and social areas during their stay in the U.S. The fourth topic was about the educational challenges associated with English language issues. The fifth topic presented Saudi students' academic challenges.

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